

San Antonio, TX - Yesterday, a Union Pacific (UP) train derailed in the Five Points area of the City of San Antonio. No one was reported injured but two homes were damaged from the impact of the 17 car derailment.

Rep. Charlie Gonzalez stated, "San Antonio has now seen more than six major train accidents in the span of 2 years. I am very concerned that after the last incident, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has not implemented the safety recommendations promulgated by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) quickly enough. I am seeking from Secretary Mary Peters, who incidentally was just sworn in as the new Secretary of Transportation, and FRA Administrator Boardman, an explanation of what steps have been taken to implement the NTSB safety recommendations, in particular the adoption of positive train control systems."

The NTSB has advocated for implementing a system that compensates for human error and incorporates collision avoidance to prevent train collisions. Known in the industry as positive train control or PTC, it is considered particularly important where passenger trains and freight trains operate. The issue has been on the Board's Most Wanted List since the inception of the list in 1990. The FRA recently issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Human Factor Caused Accidents and comments are due in December of this year.

The Congressman added, "It would be unacceptable to wait for someone to be injured or killed again before steps are taken to address the factors that most likely led to this accident. Therefore, all options must be on the table and fully considered, from the obvious human factor issues and lack of adopting better safety practices, compliance and enforcement effort by FRA, additional funding for rail safety and security, to exploring what it would take to relocate the tracks. Bottom line is that we cannot continue business as usual."

He also noted, "I expect Secretary Peters understands the urgency of the matter and will respond to the concerns expressed by me and other city and county leaders swiftly. In the interim, I call upon the Secretary to direct the FRA to issue a compliance order for enforcement against UP." In December 2005, the FRA terminated a Safety Compliance Agreement (SCA) it entered into with UP in late 2004.

In June 2004, a train crash in Macdona, Texas resulted in a chemical leak and the deaths of 2 area residents and a conductor. One train was carrying liquefied chlorine gas that was released

into the air when it derailed.

The FRA has sent three safety inspectors from its Fort Worth regional office to investigate the accident and determine what caused the 17-car derailment. A final report to determine causes will take several months to complete and would not happen before the end of the year.